

RCRIS Manifest Section: *Efficiency at its Best*

On August 7, 2000, DEQ's Resource Conservation Recovery Information System (RCRIS) Manifest Section became the first state agency in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Region 6 to give the EPA the required data for the 1999 Biennial Hazardous Waste Report. The data will be included in a national report and published for public access in 2001.

EPA collects the hazardous waste data for large quantity generators every odd year for its report to Congress. The report details the generation of hazardous waste throughout the country and where it is going. It is one way for the EPA and Congress to measure the state of the environment in the United States. In order for the EPA to chronicle this information, the states must produce clear and precise data in the correct format which takes many months to prepare.

James Miller, Program Manager in charge of the RCRIS Manifest Section, said of their responsibility, "We spend months going over the data before we release it to the EPA. We are comprehensive and reach our reporting universe very well so that we are able to get the data (from hazardous waste reporters) in good quality. We do this for the public trust of the state."

All 8,000 hazardous waste generators in the state of Louisiana must send a yearly report to DEQ detailing the handling of the waste they produce or treat. Of those reporting, DEQ is only required to send the EPA data for every odd year on the largest 441 generators. This is because the large generators produce and manage more than 95% of the hazardous waste. EPA leaves the remaining less than 5% for the state to watch over.

The reporting and tracking of hazardous waste is a requirement of the Resource Conservation Recovery Act of 1976. The EPA had sole charge of this task until the passing of the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments (HSWA) in 1984. After the HSWA amendments were passed, the states were entrusted with helping to collect data and track hazardous waste along with providing the EPA with the odd year information that was required for the biennial report.

DEQ's RCRIS Manifest section works very closely with the hazardous waste reporters throughout the state. In order for the group to get the quality information that they desire, the companies reporting must understand the types of information that they provide.

The RCRIS section sends out a reminder to all of the hazardous waste generators that they must report by the final deadline of March 1, 2001. DEQ's Miller says, "There is nothing in the regulations that says DEQ must send them (hazardous waste generators) a notice reminding them to report, but we do it out of courtesy. If we don't give them assistance, we only have ourselves to blame for not getting quality data." This is why the RCRIS section holds Annual Report Workshops throughout the state in the months of January and February to help companies figure out the proper and accurate ways of reporting.

The workshops have been held for the last 10 years for the sole purpose of helping companies and individuals organize the data that they need to produce. DEQ provides these groups with tool kits that help in the process. The workshops also serve as forums for other topics such as enforcement and small business assistance. The Enforcement and Small Business Assistance Program sections provide workshops to help hazardous waste reporters understand what they have to do to comply with the law.

Once DEQ has received the information by March 1, the RCRIS Manifest evaluates the reports to make sure they are accurate. If anything is missing from the documents, the facilities are contacted and informed of the mistakes so they can correct them.



RCRIS staff: Amy Mason, James Miller, Gayle Denino, Minta Canelas, Kim Gibson, Teri Amond, Joyce Metoyer

Collecting data and creating the report, however, is not the only job of the RCRIS Manifest Section. The group receives requests for information on the reports and also requests from inside the Agency from the Enforcement and Permitting sections. The RCRIS Manifest Section acts as an extension of the public file room because it is the sole keeper of the hazardous waste information. It is that section's responsibility to keep information current and in good working order for the public.

James Miller is very proud of his work and his staff. He has three full time staff and two student workers to deal with 8,000 annual reports. James says, "It's complex and it's stressful at times, but I think that the experience base here knows what needs to be done. I believe things are moving in the right direction."

Litter *Continued from page 10*

The Litter Program operates a hotline for reporting littering and illegal dumpsites that is available to the public at 1-888-LITRBUG (548-7284). Citizens can report people they see littering by giving DEQ the license plate number of the vehicle in question. The Litter staff will then send the owner of the vehicle an "awareness letter" reminding the person of the fines and penalties associated with being caught littering or dumping trash illegally. Recently, billboards have been posted on Louisiana highways advertising the litter hotline number. DEQ, the Keep Louisiana Beautiful Board, and Lamar Advertising came together to sponsor these billboards in order to spread the message far and wide.

If you have questions regarding DEQ's litter program, need information about activities in your area, or materials available for educational purposes, please call:

Pam Kimball at (225) 765-0151 or Judy Desselle at (225) 765-0152.

